



Forensic Science Division Status Update – Year End 2013

Staffing Levels

In FY13, the Michigan State Police (MSP) budget was appropriated monies to hire 20 new scientists. Nineteen (19) of these scientists were hired into the Forensic Science Division (FSD), across all disciplines, with the remaining scientist being hired within the CODIS Section of the Biometrics and Identification Division. The last of these scientists were hired in July 2013. Once these scientists are trained to competency (projecting December 2015), FSD anticipates it will provide forensic services that average a 30-day turnaround time in all disciplines.

Case Backlogs & Turnaround Times

The table below shows the current backlogs and turnaround times as of December 31, 2013. A 12% reduction in backlog was realized in December 2013. With planned outsourcing of cases and the continual completion of scientists' training programs, it is anticipated that FSD will see an additional 25% reduction in backlog by the end of this summer.

	Biology (DNA)	Controlled Substances	Firearms Toolmarks	Latent Prints	Toxicology Blood Alcohol	Toxicology Drug Reports	Trace Evidence Quest. Docs
Case Backlog	2,832	1,702	2,277	506	67	2,768	217
Average Turnaround Time (days)	100	40	72	28	6	180	88

Since 2009, the average turnaround time for case completion in FSD has been significantly reduced from approximately 90 days to approximately 58 days. Due to the hiring of the new scientists and the use of senior scientists to train them, FSD turnaround time remained constant from the previous year.

Plan to Reduce Backlog

Over the past four months, the Toxicology Unit at the Lansing Forensic Laboratory has completed more cases than it has received. However, the existing backlog of drug reports would still take 18-24 months to complete at the current rate of cases received vs. cases completed. To aid in this effort MSP will be outsourcing 2,500 cases to a private vendor in February of this year, which will lead to a 90% reduction in the Toxicology Unit backlog and will allow for the timely delivery of services to all law enforcement agencies and the courts. In addition, a number of biology cases were outsourced to a private vendor in December 2013, and plans are being made to outsource firearms cases later this year to help in the elimination of that backlog.

In addition to outsourcing, FSD will be piloting a nationally trending analytical process to examine sexual assault cases through the use of Y-STR screening. This technique is more precise and takes a fraction of the time that traditional biological screening requires. For controlled substances and toxicology casework, FSD has purchased hydrogen generators to begin transitioning to the use of that gas instead of helium for utilization in required instrumentation. This technology will result in improved instrument run times during casework analysis. A traditional run time of 45 minutes in a toxicology drug case will be cut to approximately 20 minutes. With nearly 40,000 cases being conducted annually between these two disciplines, the time savings will significantly improve turnaround times and increase capacity.

Summary

FSD has finally stabilized its operations following the unexpected 2009 closure of the Detroit Police Department Crime Laboratory, which resulted in an immediate backlog of over 20,000 cases. Funding has been restored to MSP's budget that has allowed for an adequate number of scientists and technicians to be hired and trained, equipment and instrumentation to be purchased, and necessary facility improvements to be made to laboratories. FSD's efforts have resulted in nearly a 50% reduction in case backlog from 2009. With sustained support, forensic services within Michigan will continue to improve to a level that will meet the demands of the courts and all law enforcement.